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SOME ACCOUNT
OF
Camden's **R**ise and **G**rowth

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BY
HOWARD M. COOPER

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Some Account of Camden's Rise and Growth.

HE MUST be painstaking, indeed, who can glean anything from the field of history wherein Isaac Mickle, Dr. Fisler and Judge Clement have gathered, and I can only hope, that in collecting under one head widely scattered information, I may be able to refresh your knowledge of some of the local history of our good city.

In 1618 Lord De La Warr, sailing along the Atlantic coast on his return to Virginia from England, died at sea opposite the mouth of "a goodly and noble river," which, as a perpetual monument to his memory, forever indicating the place of his death, was thence called the Delaware. Sailing up this broad river in 1631, noting the creeks and estuaries emptying into it, the Dutch commander, De Vries, discovered, about one hundred miles from its mouth, on the eastern shore, a large thickly wooded island, which he called Jacques Eylandt. The Swedes, coming some seven or eight years after, observing the same isle, with much better taste called it by its Indian name, Aquikanasra. Upon that island we are gathered to-night. By the concurrent testimony of the early Dutch and Swedish writers it was bounded on the west and north by the Delaware; on the east by what the Indians called the Asoroche river, the Dutch the Timmerkill, the Swedes the Hiorte-Kilen—our Cooper's creek; and on the south by the Quinquorenning of the Indians, the Graef Ernest of the Dutch—our Newton

creek. Whether these early historians were absolutely correct in their geography or not, it will not seem so impossible that the waters of Cooper's creek once had an outlet into Newton creek, to any one who will carefully observe the topography of the land along the Haddonfield turnpike about where the White Horse road branches off, and note on the one hand the ravine across Harleigh Cemetery, that, even now, where its upper end has been filled for a roadway, puts up almost to the turnpike, and a little beyond, on the other hand, winding through the low land skirting the road, the small rivulet that is the head of the north branch of Newton creek, with only the narrow water-shed along which the Haddonfield turnpike runs dividing them. Seeing this, and recollecting how universally the cutting off of the forests lessens the rain fall and diminishes the streams, the observer will hesitate before accusing the early Dutch and Swedish discoverers of anticipating Munchausen.

Though they explored, neither the Dutch nor the Swedes settled here where the Mæroahkong tribe of the Delaware Indians lived, as their fathers had before them, undisturbed by the fact that across the great water a humble shepherd, aroused by the light within him to God's call, was preaching the absolute equality of man, and the entire peaceableness of God's Kingdom, and was drawing down upon himself and upon those whose consciences, awakened by his calls, were in numbers joining him, the oppression and the ire of those who profited by caste and lived by the sword. Until the persecution in England drove the Friends to West Jersey for asylum, these Indians, under Arasapha, their king, with their village at Cooper's Point, were the only inhabitants within our limits.

Who first of the English emigrants made the future Camden his home is uncertain, but it was probably Richard Arnold or William Cooper. Few traces remain of Richard

Arnold, who seems to have left no descendants in these parts. William Cooper, ancestor of many families that still cluster about his choice of a home, came from England in 1679 and stopped for about a year at Burlington, before he chose his permanent residence. Passing up and down the Delaware, the bold bluff, heavily wooded with pine timber at the point where the river, sharply curving, receives the stream called by the Swedes the Hiorte-Kilen, or Deer Creek, from the many deer seen along its banks, and along which grew "peach trees and the sweet smelling sassafras tree," striking his fancy, he fixed upon it as his future abode, and called it "Pyne Poynte." His name, however, soon attached itself permanently to both point and creek. He located at Cooper's Point in the Spring of 1681, building his house well out on the river's edge, just below the mouth of the creek, a site long years ago washed away by the encroaching tide.

Recognizing the brotherhood of the Indians and their right to the soil that they and their fathers hunted over and possessed undisputed, the commissioners sent over by the proprietors of West Jersey bought of them their right from Oldman's creek to Assunpink, securing their title by three deeds, the earliest of which, dated September 10th, 1677, covered Camden's territory, and extended from Timber to Rancocas creek. William Cooper, further to satisfy the tribe at Cooper's Point, paid them for the right they still claimed, and received from them a deed executed by Tallacca, their chief, and witnessed by several of their tribe. Returning the red man's trust and friendliness with honesty and fair dealing, Camden's early settlers found them always friends, and no tales of Indian massacre blot our history.

Thus was commenced, at the very outset, that never-varying policy of justness in all her dealings with the Indians that has given to our fair State such enviable and excep-

tional fame, enabling Samuel L. Southard eloquently to say: "It is a proud fact in the history of New Jersey, that every part of her soil has been obtained from the Indians by fair and voluntary purchase and transfer, a fact that no other State in the Union, not even the land which bears the name of Penn, can boast of."

Before the settlement of our over-shadowing neighbor of Brotherly Love, a few other scattering Friends, following William Cooper, began to locate in the neighborhood of his home; and as they had braved the perils of the ocean and of the wilderness, and torn themselves away from all ties of home, kindred and early associations, for the boon of worshipping God uninterruptedly in the way that to them seemed right, they immediately, though but two or three gathered in His name, opened a meeting for His worship, the first record of which is this minute of the Monthly Meeting held at Thomas Gardiner's house, Burlington, Seventh month (September) 5th, 1681: "Ordered that Friends of Pyne Poynte have a meeting on every Fourth-day, and to begin at the second hour, at Richard Arnold's house." Arnold's house stood, as shown on Thomas Sharp's map of A. D. 1700, a short distance above the mouth of Newton creek, and thus, within its log walls, at the very beginning of the settlement, was the first of Camden's ever widening circle of churches established. It was the only "meeting" between Salem and Burlington, and the third in priority in West Jersey, and has been kept up by Friends without a lapse from that time to the present.

Shortly afterward the meeting was held at Pyne Poynte, at the house of William Cooper, a minister, and continued there until the arrival of the "Irish Friends," who settled at Newton in the spring of 1682, when, as Thomas Sharp, their historian, quaintly says, "Immediately there was a meeting sett up and kept at the house Mark Newby, and in a short time it grew and increased, unto which William

Cooper and family, that live at the Poynte, resorted, and sometimes the meeting was kept at his house, who had been settled sometime before."

But as the Newton Friends were much more numerous than the few scattered families about the Poynte, it was more convenient to most of the members for the place of worship to be located at their settlement; and in 1684 the first building devoted to religious meetings in Gloucester county was built on the middle branch of Newton creek, at what is now West Collingswood Station, on the Reading Railroad to Atlantic City.

By 1686 quite a number of emigrants had arrived in this part of West Jersey and settled about Red Bank, Woodbury, Arwames or Gloucester, Newton and the Poynte, and felt strongly the inconvenience of having to go all the way to Salem or Burlington to transact their public business. Accordingly, on the 26th of May, 1686, the proprietors, freeholders and inhabitants of the "Third and Fourth Tents," that is, the territory between Pensauken and Oldman's creek, acting in the spirit of pure Democracy, met at Arwames and formed that quaintly curious frame of county government, having only ten short paragraphs, that is still preserved in the original book of minutes, in the Clerk's office of Gloucester county, at Woodbury.

"This was the origin of Old Gloucester, the only county in New Jersey that can deduce its existence from a direct and positive compact between her inhabitants."*

The action of the people in thus forming their county organization, without any authority of the Legislature, was, after having been indirectly recognized in one or two other laws, directly sanctioned in 1694, by an act of the Legislature, establishing the boundaries that they had themselves chosen, and adopting their title of the county of Gloucester.

*Mickle, page 25.

The necessity of a regular ferry to Philadelphia being very soon felt by the new settlers, they applied to their new Court, at Gloucester, to license one, which, on the first day of First month, (March) 1687, it did, as appears by this minute: "It is proposed to ye Bench y-t a fferry is very needfull and much wanted from Jersey to Philadelphia, and y-t William Roydon's house is look-t upon as a place convenient, and the said William Royden, a person suitable for that imploy, and therefore an order desired from ye Bench that a fferry may be there fixed, &c., to which ye Bench assents and refer to ye grand jury to methodize ye same and fix ye rates thereof." This they proceeded to do in a very leisurely manner, for not until one year afterwards, on the first day of the First month, 1688, did they issue their license to William Royden and his assigns, permitting and appointing "that a common passage or ferry for man and beast be provided, fixed and settled in some convenient and proper place between ye mouths or entrances of Cooper's creek and Newton creek," within which limits "all other persons are desired and requested to keep no other common or public passage or ferry." The license also fixed the ferriage at not more than 6d. per head, for each person, and 12d. for man and horse or other beast, except swine, calves and sheep, "which shall pay only six pence per head and no more."

Thus was established the original of our present ample ferry facilities. It was located near the foot of Cooper street, its boats being only open flat-boats propelled by oars or sails. A few years afterwards it was purchased by William Cooper, and for more than one hundred years thereafter Camden was everywhere known as Cooper's Ferries. To-day our Royden street perpetuates the memory of Camden's first ferryman.

The establishment of the county only supplied a part of the necessary political machinery, and so on the first day

of June, 1695, the Grand Jury, with the assent of the Bench, and in accordance with an act of the then last Assembly, constituted the constablewick or township of Newton to extend from "the lowermost branch of Cooper's creek to ye southerly branch of Newton creek bounding Gloucester," but fixing no bounds on the east. With their local government thus completed, the people in these parts remained content for one hundred and thirty-three years. Thus was created old Newton township, which, after having its fairest portion cut off in the creation of Haddon township, was finally, after a life of one hundred and seventy-six years, swallowed up by its own progeny and obliterated from the map in 1871, when Camden's revised charter was obtained.

Robert Turner, an Irish Friend, residing in Philadelphia, owned large estates in Pennsylvania and in East and West Jersey, among which were some large tracts of land within the present limits of Camden. In 1696 he sold to John Kaighin four hundred and fifty-five acres, and the next year five hundred and ten acres, lower down the river, to Archibald Mickle. John Kaighin came originally from the Isle of Man and Archibald Mickle from Ireland. Both settled for a short time in Philadelphia, but each moved to Jersey on making these purchases. John Kaighin chose for the site of his house the Point that bears his name to this day, and shortly afterwards built, with bricks brought from England, a substantial house, modeled after an English farm house, which, enlarged and so greatly changed as to have lost all its original appearance, and now numbered 1126 and 1128 South Second street, is probably the oldest house in Camden. In front of it yet stand two yew trees, which Elizabeth Haddon brought from England and gave to John Kaighin about 1704.

William Cooper, John Kaighin and Archibald Mickle soon became prominent men, and their descendants gradually

increased their possessions until they owned all the land within the limits of our city before its absorption of the town of Stockton, the Coopers' land extending southward to Line street, so-called, because it marked the line between them and the Kaighins; the Kaighins' land extending southward from Line street to Little Newton creek, popularly known as the Line ditch, because it was the boundary between them and the Mickles, and the Mickles extending southward from Line ditch to Newton creek, and every title in Camden to-day, between Cooper's creek and the Delaware, can be traced back to a Mickle, a Kaighin or a Cooper.

At the opening of the Eighteenth century the smoke curling from less than a dozen clearings by the water's edge pointed out the forerunners more than two centuries ago of our present expanding town. A score of years of hard work had passed since they landed; they had gathered about them some few of the comforts they had left behind across the seas; they had "sett upp" the meeting for the free worship of God that caused them to leave friends and relations and "transport themselves and familys into this wilderness part of America"; they had established ferry communication with their friends across the river; they had settled their free form of local civil government, and, having recognized the right of the aborigines to the soil and treated them as its owners, they were living in most harmonious relations with them, and gradually increasing their clearings they were quietly prospering. Their growth was only the steady increase of an industrious population. For after the arrival and settlement of the Irish Friends at Newton there was no great influx of emigrants to this part of West Jersey, Philadelphia attracting the greater part of the new comers. Occasionally a family would move across the river, but down to the time of the Revolution the popula-

tion was mainly the descendants of those who were swept over here on that swell of migration caused by religious persecution in England in the Seventeenth century, so that when the Declaration of Independence had been made, while Philadelphia had become the first town in the colonies, our territory was yet largely woodland, dotted by a few farm houses and intersected by but one or two roads.

However, in 1773, Jacob Cooper, a merchant living in Philadelphia, and a lineal descendant of the first William Cooper, foreseeing the future town, employed Thompson, a Philadelphia surveyor, to lay out forty acres into a town plot. A Whig, sympathizing with his fellow Whigs in their struggles to obtain from their mother country that representation which they claimed should ever accompany taxation, and venerating those Englishmen who, believing in the justness of this demand of the colonies, had the courage to openly avow their belief, Jacob Cooper named his new town Camden, in honor of that powerful champion of constitutional liberty and firm advocate of fair dealing with the colonies, who has been called the right arm of Lord Chat-ham, Charles Pratt, first Earl of Camden. In the infant town thus christened only six streets ran north and south, King, Queen, Whitehall, Cherry, Cedar and Pine, intersected at right angles at the Delaware side by Cooper and Market streets only, but on the eastern side by Plum also.

With that same admixture of loyalty and defiance so marked in almost all the earlier steps taken by our revolutionary forefathers, while naming his town after one of the foremost champions of the American cause in England, Jacob Cooper honored his King and Queen in the naming of his streets, and through all the bitter feeling engendered by our two struggles with the mother country his nomenclature remained unchanged. It was not until May 24th, 1822, that, adopting a new system, by ordinance of Council,

King, Queen, Whitehall, Cherry, Cedar and Pine became Front, Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth and Sixth streets. But it was left until the days of pretentious change that, in the very mockery of old associations, on Camden's one hundredth anniversary, time-honored Plum was dropped for meaningless Arch.

Almost immediately after Camden was planned the Revolution broke out and the struggle for independence and existence as a free people absorbing all other energies, scarcely a thing was done to promote the growth of the little town whose birth was so unheralded.

During the whole of the occupation of Philadelphia by the British, Cooper's Point was held by them as an outpost, General Abercrombie having his headquarters in the old gambrel-roofed farm house, still standing at the head of Point street, with the stone in which is cut the date of its erection, 1734, still in place in its gable end, while an English and several Scotch and Hessian regiments were quartered at the old ferry house, at the foot of Cooper street, torn down in 1882. The British lines extended along the river front from Cooper's Point down nearly to Market street; thence up to Sixth street; thence diagonally about northeast to Cooper's creek, portions of their redoubts remaining for many years afterwards. The Hessians, under Count Donop, two thousand five hundred strong, crossed at Cooper's Point late in the afternoon of the 21st of October, 1777, on their way to the battle of Red Bank, and the straggling survivors, after their defeat, returned to Philadelphia the same way. Lying directly opposite Philadelphia, Camden's territory was constantly overrun, and its farming population harrassed and alarmed by detached parties of British soldiery skirmishing and foraging, taking what they wished. When the British fleet arrived at Philadelphia, their men-of-war anchored on the Pennsylvania side, while their convoys

and tenders, numbering about one hundred, filled the Jersey channel, and cannon balls from their guns are preserved to-day, as valued relics, by the descendants of those along our shores, whom the wanton firing greatly alarmed if it did not much damage.

Although Camden is not distinguished as one of the battlefield of the Revolution, yet the ground on which the non-resisting followers of Fox have placed their humble meeting-house was twice the scene of warlike manoeuvres. In the early part of 1778, Gen. Anthony Wayne, being sent with a body of soldiers into the lower counties of our State to collect horses and cattle for the American army, with his usual fierce and bold aggressiveness, soon made the enemy everywhere dread his onslaught; and Colonel Stirling, with a regiment of the Queen's Rangers, one of the best in the service, was sent to Haddonfield to watch him. Hearing that he had left Mount Holly to attack them, the British, fully believing discretion to be the better part of valor when "Mad Anthony" was about, hastily retreated, never stopping until they reached, late at night, the shelter of their earthworks at Cooper's Point, although "the night was uncommonly severe and a cold sleet fell the whole way from Haddonfield to the ferry." Wayne pursued them with his usual impetuosity. The next morning, March 1st, 1778, the enemy sent out fifty picked men for some remaining forage three or four miles up the Haddonfield road, who were met by Wayne's advancing cavalry and forced to retreat. The Americans dashed on to the very lines of the British, drawn up between Sixth and Market streets and Cooper's creek bridge. A sharp and spirited skirmish ensued, heavy firing being kept up by the British, from about where the Friends' meeting-house now stands, on the main body of the Americans, stationed in the woods along the Haddonfield road, which then intersected Market street at Broad-

way, where the Catholic Church now is. The English, outnumbering the Americans ten to one, compelled them to retire to the woods, but without the loss of a man, although the British had several wounded and one sergeant of grenadiers killed. As the patriots retired, an officer reined up his steed and, "facing the Rangers as they dashed on, slowly waved his sword for his attendants to retreat. The English Light Infantry came within fifty yards of him, when one of them called out, 'You are a brave fellow, but you must go away.' The undaunted officer, paying no attention to the warning, one McGill, afterwards a quartermaster, was ordered to fire at him. He did so, and wounded the horse, but the rider was unscathed, and soon joined his comrades in the woods a little way off."* This daring officer was the Count Pulaski.

Soon afterwards, in the same month, Pulaski, whilst reconnoitering with a body of horsemen, almost under the fortifications of the British, was only saved from an ambush, arranged by Colonel Shaw on both sides of old Cooper street, near the Friends' Meeting-house, by William West, a patriot apprised of the danger, who, seeing him riding down the road some distance ahead of his men, leading them into the trap, waved to him to retreat. Taking the hint, Pulaski at once wheeled his men, and the ambuscade failed. Not so fortunate, however, was a party of militia that the British surprised about this time, at Cooper's creek bridge, many, after a sharp fight, being killed and the rest taken prisoners. Soon afterwards the enemy evacuated Philadelphia, the scene of hostilities shifted, and our immediate neighborhood had little further annoyance from the Red-coats.

Long before the Revolution, Franklin spent a night

*Mickle, page 54.

within our present Camden, of which he tells in his famous autobiography. In October, 1723, being a boy of but seventeen, and on his way to Philadelphia to seek employment as a printer, he came across a boat at Burlington in the evening going to Philadelphia and went aboard of it. There being no wind, all, Franklin included, were forced to row the whole way. About midnight, fearing that they had passed the unlighted town, they put ashore, and building a fire of fence rails staid until morning, when they found they were in the mouth of Cooper's creek, "a little above Philadelphia," where they arrived "about eight or nine o'clock on the Sunday morning and landed at the Market street wharf." Up which street, having bought "three great puffy rolls," he walked in his working clothes, "with a roll under each arm and eating the other," passing his future wife standing in the doorway of her father's house, thinking that he made "a most awkward, ridiculous appearance," which, he says, "I certainly did."

Washington, while President, used at times to cross the Delaware at Cooper's Ferry and ride out Main street for some distance, and then turn and ride back the same way. On one of these rides, when near the ferry, he nearly frightened out of his wits an old Hessian, a deserter from the British army at the battle of Trenton, who made bold to ask him his name, when, bowing, he replied, "My name is George Washington."

For many years after the Revolution Camden was a town only in name, and that only on paper, being called Cooper's Ferries, or simply The Ferries, until after the beginning of this century. A few sales of lots had been made and a few houses began to cluster about the ferries, and a road or two more had been opened, but all else was farm or woodland.

When this century opened not a house of worship stood

within the present limits of Camden. In 1801, however, the Friends, having decided to move their place of meeting from their old house on Newton creek to a more central locality, built the brick meeting-house that stands at the corner of Mount Ephraim avenue and Mount Vernon street, the forerunner of Camden's present sixty-five or seventy churches ; and next, in 1810, the Methodists dedicated their first church at the northwest corner of Fourth and Federal streets, long since converted into stores, followed, in 1818, by the First Baptist Church, on Fourth street, and thereafter the churches kept pace with Camden's growth.

The mode of ferriage across the Delaware in open boats, established as we have seen so early in our history, remained without change or improvement until 1809 or 1810, when a small steanboat, carrying passengers only, was placed on the river. She was named the "Camden" and ran from the foot of Cooper street to the lower side of Market street, Philadelphia. In 1809 the ferry at Kaighn's Point was established, and soon a small steamboat, also carrying passengers only, and also, it is believed, called the "Camden," was placed on the line. Which of the two was the first steamboat is doubtful. Crude as they were they were marvelous advances over the primitive wherries. But the passenger traffic across the river was too inconsiderable to keep up such a stride, and, after a few years, the ferrymen, taking in sail, adopted in summer the team boats, propelled by horses walking round a circle on a tread wheel, and stopping entirely for an hour at noon-time to feed the horses; and in the winter, when the ice in the river was not frozen solid, fell back upon the old wherries. It was not until 1835 that the steam ferry boat, regularly making its trips winter and summer alike, became firmly established as a fixture on the Delaware highway. When it was proposed to build a steamboat powerful enough to break through ice, "many

declared it as impossible as it would be to propel a boat up Market street hill." But the old "State Rights," with her eighty horse power, proved the force of Kossuth's motto: "Nothing is impossible to him that wills."

Though Camden's early growth was very slow, and half a century after its birth it was but a small town, yet it had a vigor of self-assertion that compelled its recognition by the people of the county. The annual town meetings of Newton township had been held alternately here and at Haddonfield until 1827, when the Haddonfield people, conscious of their greater voting strength, at the town meeting, held regularly in turn at their place, resolved to shove Camden to the wall and thereafter to meet only at Haddonfield. Their superior number carried the question. But he laughs best who laughs last, and they unconsciously aroused the young giant that ever afterward whipped them in many a hard fought battle. The Camdenians left the town meeting very indignant, and Jeremiah Sloan, then a talented young lawyer of great promise, said to the Haddonfielders, "I'll fix you; I will have Camden incorporated next winter." He executed his threat, and at the next session of the legislature the act was passed incorporating the city of Camden.

Thus it was that Camden, with a population of but 1,143, attained her legal majority with the right to manage her own affairs, as she saw fit, free from the tutelage of country town meetings.

This first charter was passed February 13th, 1828, and is entitled "An act to incorporate a part of the township of Newton, in the county of Gloucester." It has only eighteen sections, and, though but seventy-one years have passed, many of its provisions already sound quaint. It calls Broadway "the public road leading to Woodbury from the Camden Academy," and Newton avenue "the road

leading from Kaighnton to Cooper's creek bridge," and Petty's Island "Pethey's Island." It provides that the mayor shall be elected by the common council, and that one of the aldermen and one of the common council "shall always be a resident of Kaighnton, and one of each of said officers shall always be a resident of the village commonly called 'William Cooper's Ferry'." And that the mayor, recorder and aldermen shall constitute a court to be styled "the Court of General Quarter Sessions of the Peace of the city of Camden," having within the city all the powers that the county courts of Quarter Sessions have, excepting the granting of tavern licenses, and hearing appeals in pauper cases—a court abolished by the act of February 29th, 1856.

At the first election for city officers, held March 10th, 1828, in town meeting at the Academy, which stood at Sixth and Market streets, where the George Genge public school now is, the following common councilmen were chosen: James Duer, from Cooper's Ferry; John Lawrence, Ebenezer Toole and Richard Fetters, from Camden, and Joseph Kaighn, from Kaighnton. James Duer and Joseph Kaighn declining to serve, at a special election, held on the fifth of the following April, Edward Dougherty and Richard B. Champion were chosen in their place. The new Council held its first meeting on March 13th, 1828, and elected Samuel Lanning first Mayor of Camden.

The new municipality, however, had but little of the appearance of a city. The three villages of which it was composed—Camden proper, Cooper's Point and Kaighn's Point—remained separated by cultivated farms and retained their peculiar characteristics for many years. Extending but a short distance from the river, all the territory east of them to Cooper's creek was as much country as any other part of the county, and where used for purposes of hus-

bandry only, was, by the charter, exempted from taxation for the support of the city.*

I cannot better contrast then and now than by bringing to light from the musty first minutes of Council two transactions. On April 23d, 1828, "The Council rented of Richard Fetters for one year the room over his store for the purpose of a temporary Council and Court hall, for the sum of twenty-five dollars per annum or six dollars per quarter." And on June 5th, 1829, the committee appointed to make "a fair expose of the receipts and expenditures of the corporation up to this date" reported to Council that there had come into Samuel Lanning's hands \$3,456.23, and paid out by him \$3,512.49, leaving a balance due him of \$56.26. Can the groaning taxpayers of to-day, with their load of \$2,246,800 of bonded indebtedness, help wishing in some respects for those good old times?

About this time the desire for a more speedy conveyance than the old stage coach was cropping out in many places throughout the country, and very general inquiry was being made into the feasibility of railroads to meet the want. During 1827 the project of a railway to connect Philadelphia and New York began to be talked of in earnest. Meetings were held in the Camden Academy of those favoring the enterprise, preliminary surveys made, and such general interest excited as finally resulted in the Legislature granting, on February 4th, 1830, the charter for "The Camden and Amboy Railroad and Transportation Company." The company was soon organized and the road begun, and in 1834 the first train ran into Camden. This was a very marked event for the young city. The railroad was the longest then built in this country and its completion a matter of great rejoicing. People kept watch to see

*L., 1828, page 127.

the trains arrive, even those as far off as Kaighn's Point, no houses then intervening, going to the top of their houses to view the novel sight.

Camden, not satisfied with being a city, now began to think that there should be a new county created with it as the shire-town, and actively pushed the project. This excited great opposition throughout the county. Indignation meetings were held at Woodbury and other places. The Camden people had to fight almost unaided their uphill battle. They claimed it as a necessary measure "to accommodate the fast swelling population of the north and northwestern townships, and partly to secure to West Jersey her just share of influence in the State government." At last, after a hard fight under the lead of Captain John W. Mickle, an uncompromising Democrat, they won and got the Legislature, which was Democratic, to pass, on March 13, 1844, under the plea that the new county would be Democratic, the act setting it off from Old Gloucester, and had it named after their own city, which was to be the seat of justice for one year and until an election could be had. But the people throughout the country were so incensed at the city's again foiling them that at the first election they voted, irrespective of party, against the Democratic nominees, recognizing no other issue than Camden and Anti-Camden, and for fifteen years the Democrats never carried the county. For many years afterwards, whenever Captain Mickle went to Trenton, he was taunted about his Democratic county; and to this day Camden county is politically anti-Democratic.

The same antagonism again cropped out at the permanent fixing of the county seat. Camden, of course, nominated herself, and all the rest of the county, boiling over in rage at the very idea, nominated Long-A-Coming and carried the election. But the Camden people would not

stay down, and in 1848, aided largely by the pugnacity and ability of the late Abraham Browning of honored memory, had a law passed directing a new election.

The second fight was doubly bitter. It was again the whole of the county against the city, but Camden had well encased herself in armor against the shafts of her opponents in her unaided tilt against the field, and came out victorious by a large majority. The vanquished, as usual, raised the cry of fraud, alleging that more majority was cast for Camden than she had inhabitants, men and women and children, and that, themselves ashamed of the size of their vote, the Camden people threw two barrels of votes in the river, and kept their boats fast to the wharves at Philadelphia, preventing hundreds of legitimate voters from coming across the river. Sober history will have to admit that on that day Camden's growth took a marvelous upward bound, if the number of votes polled in the city be a fair indication of its population.

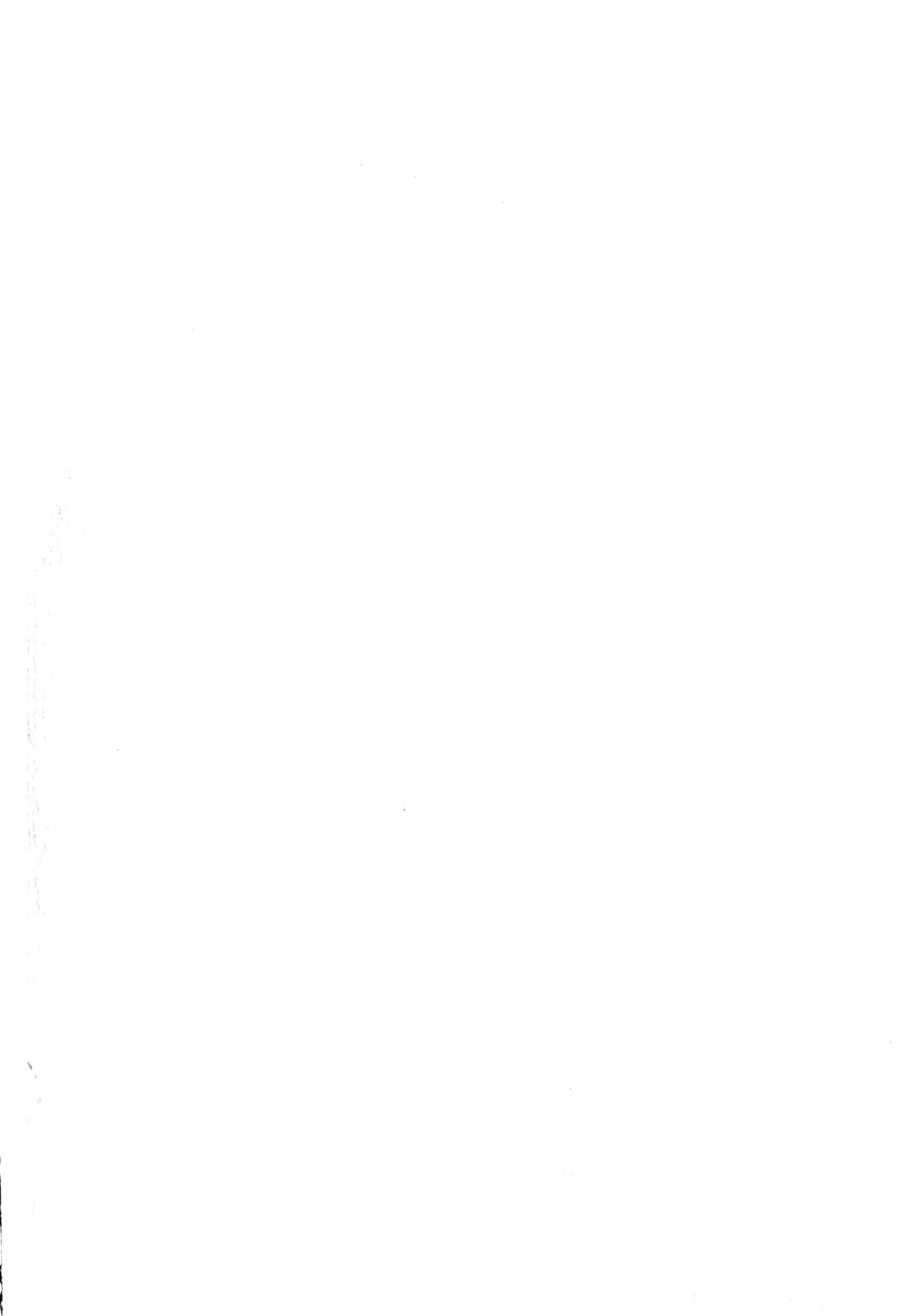
This last election definitely settled the contest, the country people submitted to the inevitable, and to-day admit that, however unfairly it may have been made, the choice was a wise one.

Immediately after the settlement of this question a strong rivalry sprang up between John W. Mickle, President of the Federal Street Ferry Company, and Abraham Browning, heavily interested with his brothers in the Market Street Ferry, over the location of the Court House, each striving to have it placed on the street leading to the ferry in which he was interested, in the hope of turning to that ferry the trend of travel. The struggle was finally settled by placing the Court House equi-distant from each ferry. And this is the reason it was built where it is, on the lot nearest to the ferries that extended from Federal to Market street, and placed exactly midway between the two streets.

In 1850 Camden obtained a new charter with enlarged powers but no increase of territory, and began to grow with considerable energy, until the horrible burning of the ferry-boat "New Jersey," on the night of March 15th, 1856, with its holocaust of sixty-one lives, at once checked migrations from Philadelphia, while the panic of 1857 following, completed the blow to its prosperity. Then the doubt and uncertainty of the impending rebellion, and the exhaustion of the struggle when entered upon, protracted the stagnation and our city lay in a torpor until late after the collapse of the war, the prosperous times thawed it into new life, that, bursting the chrysalis of the boundaries of its original incorporation of 1828, reached out and grasped, under its revised charter of 1871, new territory, increasing its size three fold. And in the same year, when the Camden Horse Railroad Company started its passenger cars, came what all had been hoping for, public conveyances enabling everyone to ride from one end of the city to the other, so evidently supplying a public want that the *West Jersey Press* was enabled to thus exultantly describe the opening of the lines to public travel: "Federal street had a huge load of excitement to stagger under on Saturday last, and the street was crowded with spectators from early morn to dewy eve, while the curbstone corners in particular were the resorts of shouting boys and wondering men. A long wished for event came to pass, and a new era in the growth of the city's conveniences was successfully inaugurated. In a word the new horse cars began to run. Let us mark the date, November 25th, 1871. Such occurrences as these are mile posts in the history of our city's progress, and should be recorded as worthy of special eclat."

I may well stop here, since the happenings of the last quarter of a century too nearly touch the present to need to be recalled to your recollection. Such then, brokenly told,

is Camden's story of the past. To-day, arousing from the stagnation following the panic of '93, our town does not have to seek new territory, but has only to receive that tendered to it by its neighbors, conscious that under its protecting ægis their prosperity and happiness will be enhanced. And enlarged in boundary one-third and in population one-sixth, under the act of March 24th, 1899, annexing, at the request of its inhabitants, the town of Stockton, Camden, covering now a territory of some twelve square miles with a population of seventy-five thousand, the metropolis of West Jersey, following the law of growth of all live municipalities, moves on to its greater, and with its improved streets, its fine water, its parks, libraries and high school, to its higher development.



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